



U.S. Department of Justice

*United States Attorney
Eastern District of Virginia*

*Paul J. McNulty
United States Attorney*

*8000 World Trade Center 757/441-6331
101 West Main Street
Norfolk, Va. 23510*

For Immediate Release
Thursday, October 20, 2005
Norfolk, Virginia

For Further Information Contact
Deanna Warren 757-441-6331

NEWS RELEASE

Paul J. McNulty, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia announced that McAllen Mathurim, age 32, of Chesapeake, Virginia, was found guilty today by a jury following a three day trial in the U.S. District Court in Norfolk on charges of possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. Mathurim, who faces up to 10 years in prison, is scheduled to be sentenced on January 18, 2006.

The federal charges stem from the January 16, 2005 murder of Maurice Branch. Maurice Branch was killed with a single bullet in the 400 block of King Street, in the parking lot behind Thumper's Bar and Grill, in Portsmouth, Virginia. Mathurim was stopped shortly after the murder by Portsmouth police officers, following a high speed chase through the downtown tunnel and a crash on the entrance ramp to the Berkley Bridge. A Taurus .40 caliber handgun was found on the floorboard of the vehicle where Mathurim was seated. The bullet removed from Maurice Branch was positively identified as being fired by the Taurus handgun possessed by Mathurim. Mathurim was on federal supervised release at the time of the offense and a petition for violation of supervised release is pending in United States District Court.

Mr. McNulty stated: "Combating gun violence is one of our highest priorities in Hampton Roads. This conviction is yet another example of our resolve to remove violent criminals from our communities and make them safer places to live and work."

Joining in this announcement is Portsmouth Commonwealth Attorney Earle Mobley, who stated: "This is the fruition of the partnership that Mr. McNulty has established. I am very pleased to have a designated attorney who is able to use the federal system to prosecute cases that we are unable to prosecute. The results speak for themselves."

-more-

The case was referred for federal prosecution under Project Safe Neighborhoods. Project

Safe Neighborhoods is a multi-agency joint federal and state task force targeting armed criminals for prosecution in federal court for possession or use of firearms in violation of federal laws and is aimed at reducing violent crimes.

The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and Portsmouth Police officers, and prosecuted for the United States by Special Assistant United States Attorney Andrew M. Robbins, a Portsmouth Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney specially designated to prosecute firearms cases in federal court.

#